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Dear Friends,

Recently Sister Marcia Boes (who is preparing to make perpetual vows as a Sister of St. Francis in October) shared a beautiful musical reflection, her ritual presentation as part of her thesis to earn her Master’s degree in liturgical music. The prayer was based on the Tavola of St. Clare, depicting eight significant scenes from St. Clare’s life as she became the female counterpart of St. Francis. The evening pilgrimage was guided by the firelight, with the only light in chapel being St. Clare’s “bright light” of participants’ candles. That night’s song lyrics come to mind as we share this magazine with you:

As a fire is meant for burning with a bright and warming flame,
so the church is meant for mission, giving glory to God’s name.
Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care,
we join hands across the nations, finding neighbors everywhere.

(“As a Fire is Meant for Burning”, text by Ruth Duck)

Thank you for joining hands as neighbors, providing a home at St. Francis for residents and staff of St. Francis Senior Ministries, with ‘children of all ages’ grounding themselves in nature and gently touching the earth at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center, with anxious lives finding a pathway to peace at St. Francis Spirituality Center, and with those seeking fulfillment of basic needs, healing and reconciliation with our Sisters and Associates in ministry in the United States and Mexico.

May the “bright light” of Christ be your Light of refuge and your way to peace,

Sister Sara Aldridge
Community Minister
Estate Planning: How Do I Get There?

Few of us know the date and hour when we will experience a life changing event. In order to protect our assets in the event of such an occurrence, the time for planning what happens to one’s estate should be now! Watch Estate Planning: How Do I Get There? -- a video presentation by Lee Martin, retired development officer of Heidelberg University. Lee offers a very understandable review of what an estate plan is and how to develop one’s own plan. Follow the link to this video: https://youtu.be/-wCDNNPwtlw.

Take Control of Your Legacy

Get started with creating a plan that protects the important people and causes in your life. Learn more: http://plannedgiving.tiffinfranciscans.org. Contact Sister Joanne Lammers at 419-447-0435 or jlammers@tiffinfranciscans.org

CARE Training in Mexico

Ted Dunn, Ph.D. of Comprehensive Consulting Services in St. Louis, volunteered to lead a series of three training workshops for Associate volunteers at Cuernavaca Children’s Mission in Cuernavaca, Mexico. “Transforming Communities Through CARE” prepares volunteers to be effective in tutoring children and working with families to build bridges out of poverty through education. The Donald D. Lynch Family Foundation sponsored the participants costs.
They come together because they are thirsty. Thirsty for spirituality, they want to be around other women thirsting for the same thing. They are known as the “Women at the Well”.

This group of women has been getting together twice a year for over 30 years under the direction of Sister Gemma Fenbert. “They come together to share their spiritual life journeys, supporting each other by sharing their love and compassion,” said Sister Gemma.

In 1983, the women began meeting at the home of Judy Kelly in Millersville, Ohio. Women have continued to meet over the years and still continue to gather on the St. Francis Campus, where Sister Gemma now resides. The women discuss all kinds of topics, or “any other topic that Sister Gemma brings us.” There are currently 15-20 women who are still active in the group. Several women are from the Genoa area where Sister Gemma ministered as Pastoral Associate for 15 years.

“Sr. Gemma brought the ‘Women at the Well’ retreat to St. Boniface Parish in Oak Harbor and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Genoa while she was our Pastoral Associate. With her gentle guidance and encouragement, we were able to share both laughter and tears through our joys and heartaches. Her leadership and guidance helped us see that we are all connected as Women at the Well in the Great Body of Christ,” said Lori Kamelsky.

“It is nice to bloom under Sister Gemma’s guidance,” said Elaine Conley. Elaine, a member of St. Boniface Church in Oak Harbor, first met Sister Gemma in 1999 when she was the Pastoral Associate. “Over the course of our relationship, I discovered that she shared my particular brand of spirituality, and we both liked to have fun,” said Elaine. “I like to spend quality time with quality women,” she added. There were as many as 35-40 ladies that took part in the gatherings. Many who attended began the relationship of a lifetime with Sister Gemma. “Sister Gemma is a friend eternally. We met at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Genoa,” explained Elaine Tello. “We have been through thick and thin together and have been in touch ever since she left our parish. She is a friend for life and we will be together until we die.”
According to Sister Gemma, the group eventually named themselves “Women at the Well” because they described themselves as “women who were thirsty and wanting to grow spiritually.”

Whenever the women get together, they share a potluck of their favorite salads topped with lots of laughter. They have created many happy memories together, not only through these gatherings, but also by going out for dinner, movies, and even vacationing together.

While on retreat many years ago, Sister Gemma, sometimes referred to as the “ring leader” of the group, created an original painting of her interpretation of the “Woman at the Well”. She gifted each of the women with their own print for their personal inspiration. “Sister Gemma is an amazing person, an inspiration. I never dreamed growing up that I would have a nun as one of my best friends,” said Carolyn Nusbaum. “Seven years ago in January, she introduced me in church to my future husband. We were both in our 70’s. By May we were married. We never questioned God about our meeting because it was Sister Gemma who led us to one another. She has always been so special to us and always will be” Carolyn added, “I look forward to our gathering. It is a time for spiritual reflection and Sister Gemma’s delicious popcorn.

“It still amazes me how she brought us all together and made each of us feel comfortable with ourselves and around each other,” said Kathy Varga. “When new members joined the group, she made them feel so welcome. She had the ability to bring strangers together and make them feel so special and at ease. Sister Gemma is a catalyst when it comes to making things happen. She just knows or senses that common spirit within people because she herself has that spark and knows how to bring it out in others. And she knows how to have fun!”

If you are a woman who is interested in joining other women who care about their spiritual lives and want to be a part of “Women at the Well”, contact Sister Gemma at 419.266.6528.

“I have come, that you may have life and have it to the full”
JOHN 10:10

“Women at the Well is a fun group. I really enjoy the spirituality shared among women I already know and love and also enjoy sharing this with new friends.”
- Elaine Tello

SAVE THE DATE
Live Nativity ~ Sunday, December 3, 2017
“It is very uncommon in this day and age to have someone work over 40 years at the same place of employment. To have three employees still working at St. Francis Home after all these years is something that should be celebrated,” said Donna Pryor, Human Resources Manager at St. Francis Home. “It is so special, and so are these women.”

At the young age of 18, Darlene (Derr) Bloom was hired as a dietary aide at St. Francis Home on September 10, 1976. Over the last 41 years, Darlene has held various positions at St. Francis. She began her career in the kitchen; however, Darlene only 3 years later began working for Sister Emily Fox on the men’s wing as a nurse’s aide (then known as an aide maid). Around 1983, she became the first-floor supervisor, and in the fall of 1993, she took on the role of part-time Volunteer Coordinator and Activities Aide. Shortly after, Sister Doretta Meier promoted her to full-time Volunteer Coordinator.

Darlene has been the Volunteer, Transportation and Gift Shop Coordinator since 1997 and also serves as the HIPPA Privacy Officer for St. Francis Home. “Although some might describe her as quiet, Darlene always interacts with the residents, employees and sisters. She is fun-loving and has a great personality,” said Sister Betty Lindenberger, who worked with Darlene. (Sister Betty was the Food Service Director at St. Francis Home from 1971 to 1999.) “Darlene has always been a steady and stable employee,” said Sister Betty.

“As the Volunteer Coordinator it is very important to be friendly and recruit volunteers of various ages. I have some volunteers who are like second mothers to me,” Darlene shared. “As a long-time employee, I have seen many changes over the years in administration and in facility updates. When I first started, the main people working were the Franciscan Sisters on our campus. An employee knew what was expected and always did one’s job. As a young girl right of out of high school, I was afraid of nuns but had so much respect for them.”

Darlene has always had a unique relationship with St. Francis Community. She grew up on the farm located in the back of St. Francis Campus. She is the second oldest of eight children. “I’ve liked being here on this campus my entire life and learning valuable lessons from the residents,” said Darlene. At one time, two of her sisters worked in housekeeping at St. Francis Home and her brother and son also worked in the maintenance department.

Darlene treasures so many relationships over the years. “I have made many friends with residents and coworkers whom I will never forget,” said Darlene. Why has Darlene continued to work at St. Francis Senior Ministries for over 40 years? “I love working with the residents,” said Darlene.

Diane (Perna) Windau was only a sophomore in high school in May of 1971 when she came to St. Francis looking for a job. “I have been working in the dietary department since I started here,” said Diane. Over the years, Diane has held different dietary positions, such as serving in the dining room and in the dish room. Currently, her position includes working with those residents who have a special diet and preparing supplementations as well as interviewing new admissions on their nutritional history.

“She was the very first person I hired 46 years ago,” said Sister Betty, describing Diane as someone who has always been extremely busy and active. “She was never one to let grass grow under her feet ---and she is still that way today. Diane takes pride in her work in the kitchen. She pays close attention to detail, likes to keep everything organized and is very dependable. I remember Diane as fun-loving. She always wanted to plan and coordinate parties for fellow co-workers’ birthdays and showers, or farewell parties for those going off to college. Diane was never concerned about advancing in her position. She was very content and enjoyed her work, always upbeat and lots of fun,” said Sister Betty.

“I hold a high value for caring for the elderly and enjoy working together as a team with the staff,” explained Diane. “I really enjoy residents, the work that I do, and all the friendships that I have made over the years.”

Diane has had many special memories while working at St. Francis Home. “I will never forget being nominated and receiving the
St. Clare of Assisi Award in 2009 during Charism Week. The award is presented to an individual who, like St. Clare of Assisi, is an example of humble service, prayer and healing.

Diane recalled all of the St. Francis Home facility updates and remodeling that has been done over the years, especially when the temporary kitchen operated out of the basement for two years as the current kitchen was remodeled. “St. Francis has been good to me…I can’t complain,” said Diane. “I have a lot of good memories of residents and co-workers that I’ll cherish forever. The years have gone by quickly and God willing, I hope to retire in the near future.” Diane looks forward to spending some quality time with her aging parents and sisters and enjoying some rest and relaxation at the lake.

Ginny Schumm began her career at St. Francis Home on March 13, 1973 working with Sister Emily Fox in the Laundry Department. “I have always worked in laundry. But in my first few years, I did additional things like plant flowers with former resident Ollie Omlor, weeded and even picked fruit in Clyde to bring back for residents.”

Ginny said her heart has been touched over the years - mostly through the relationships that she has had with residents. “A person becomes close to residents and their families while working at a place like this. I have stayed at St. Francis because I enjoy the residents and I really like my job,” she added.

Jackie Fowler, Team Leader for Environmental Services, has worked with Ginny for ten years and has been her supervisor for the last nine years and said, “Ginny is entirely dependable, a good role model for her co-workers, very conscientious and one of the best Christians that I know. She opens up our department promptly at 3:30 am, works the wash room and folding area, delivers carts and answers questions that residents have.”

“All three women have the spirit of St. Francis and continue to be very loyal employees,” said Sister Betty. “I am not surprised that any of them are still employed here. They are so dedicated to the residents and the needs of St. Francis Home.”

Renovations Continue to Enhance the Lives of Residents

St. Francis Home celebrated the completion of their first floor renovations with an Open House on April 19, 2017. Those in attendance were able to enjoy refreshments and tour the newly renovated first floor including a gift shop, meeting room, sitting area, chapel and physical therapy gym.

The Seneca Regional Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Services provided an official Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. President & CEO John Detwiler (lower left corner) was on hand to perform the ceremony.
First Homeschoolers Science Fair

In April, the first ever Homeschoolers Science Fair took place at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center. Sister Shirley Shafranek, educator at the center, explained to the students (some as young as 7 and 8 years old) that they needed to pick a topic, research it, test a theory, create a display and present it all to their peers, parents and other guests.

Tawnya Reinhart, parent of 12-year-old twins Ashley and Katey, brought the suggestion of a science fair to Sister Shirley since her children and other homeschoolers had never had the opportunity to participate in a science fair. "My girls struggled a bit at the beginning because they were not accustomed to creating public displays," explained Tawnya. "I was impressed by how thorough the kids were with their projects. Several had never before given a presentation in front of a group, and there were many different skill levels among the various ages of kids."

Katey chose Cupcake Chemistry for her topic. She conducted trials and taste tests that included missing ingredients. During her presentation she explained the chemistry of each ingredient. Although cupcakes are easy to make, Katey explained how one missing ingredient could change the entire chemistry of a cupcake and how they look or taste. Ashley decided to focus on a physics project using carnival games. She tried to determine whether results were actually due to physics or to a rigged set-up. All of her tests had an interactive element. For example, she constructed milk bottle pyramids for students to demolish by tossing bean bags. According to Tawnya, both girls were proud of their accomplishments and she personally had fun working with them on their projects. "It was a great learning experience," said Tawnya. "All of the parents agreed that it was well worth it and would love for their children to have the opportunity to do it again."

Eleven-year-old Ava Lucius was nervous about giving a public presentation but was also excited. "I did not realize how many people would be attending my presentation until the day of the fair, but it was really, really fun," said Ava. Ava explained how everyone first had to conduct research. "After looking
into different topics, I decided to make homemade slime. I found out that glue and borax worked the best.” Ava combined different proportions of glue, water and borax to see which solution would stretch the most. She made the glue solution using a cup of glue and a cup of water and then combined 2 teaspoons of borax and a cup of water for her borax solution. Then Ava stretched it in different ways and let the other kids try for themselves during the fair.

Eli Lucius, age 9, experimented with magnets. “Can a Toy Car Measure Magnetic Strength?” was his topic of choice. He used metal matchbox cars and inserted magnets of different strengths to test which magnetic strength would start moving cars across the table. Eli determined that the strongest magnet pulled the car the fastest.

Mindy Mennel agreed that it was a positive experience for her children, Anderson and Conner. “It was fun to watch how excited the kids were at the fair,” said Mindy. Conner focused on how salt melts ice. He thought it would be more difficult than it was to do the project. Anderson’s project was on elephant toothpaste. “He likes experimenting, so he even conducted the experiment at the fair,” Mindy explained. According to Sister Shirley, Anderson used different strengths of hydrogen peroxide to see which created the most foam. He discovered that the higher the concentration of peroxide, the more foam is produced. “They both look forward to participating in the science fair again. Sister Shirley is so good with the kids; she’s a blessing,” said Mindy.

Sister Shirley hopes that the students are able to return for the science fair next year, pick a different topic and continue to challenge themselves with more advanced research. She summed it all up saying, “It was a very good learning experience for them.”

Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala
The Franciscan Earth Literacy Center’s 10th Annual Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala has been scheduled for Friday, August 11, from 6:00 - 9:30 pm. This annual fundraiser, held on the beautiful grounds on the St. Francis Campus will be an event you won’t want to miss. Attendees will again be delighted with this year’s event as they are wined, dined and entertained under the large tent. The evening will begin with gourmet hors d’oeuvres made by the Canticle Café and the serving of local wines and micro-brew beers. While enjoying the musical entertainment by Straight from the Harp, guests will be served a gourmet meal prepared by Carolyn’s Personalized Catering of Millbury, Ohio followed by an array of delicious desserts. Activities include a wine grab, raffle, silent auction, and live auction. It’s a delightful way to spend a summer evening, surrounded by friends, family, delicious foods and music. Funds raised at the Gala directly support the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center’s environmental programs for children.

Tickets: $75.00 per ticket or $520.00 for a reserved table of 8. Deadline for all reservations: Friday, August 4. Reservations are required. To reserve tickets, call Linda Bell in the Mission Advancement Office at 419-447-0435 or by emailing lbell@tiffinfranciscans.org. Tickets can also be purchased online at Purchase Online Tickets.
Finding My Forever Home

So many questions, so much confusion. So many churches! Always searching, comparing, criticizing, and then... leaving one for another. I kept thinking, “Maybe this will be the one I feel is right for me”. I believe the term they used was “church hopper”. In my quest for the truth, I was introduced to many different denominations and found only disappointment. Yet, in my heart of hearts I just knew there had to be one that I could wrap my heart around and earnestly join and feel comfortable as a member, all inclusive.

I believe the saying goes, “When the student is ready, the teacher shall appear”. One year ago at Easter time I wasn’t going to church anywhere. In fact, I had given up on churches altogether. There are only so many different opinions one can consider before doubt and depression set in.

So last year about a month after Easter I said to Bill, my husband, “Why don’t we just go to a Catholic Church, not join, but at least hear the word of God?” You see, Bill was raised Catholic, but after losing his first wife and two others with cancer, he was as lost as I when it came to being involved with a body of believers. To my amazement, he said, “OK”.

We proceeded to go to St. Joe’s here in town. Needless to say, I was completely lost during the service, but I loved the candles, incense and, the enjoyable part of it all, Father Joe looked to me just like Liberace! (He still does in my eyes. No disrespect, as I hold Liberace in great esteem.) To make this short, Bill and I started going on Sundays pretty regularly. When they announced holding a summer RCIA, I thought this would be a great opportunity to find out what everyone was doing during the service and why. You know, why all the changing postures, like standing, kneeling, sitting?

I want to interject here that in 1993 I made an attempt to join St. Wendelin’s in Fostoria but wasn’t ready. I was in a very bad marriage at the time and neither one of us were capable of understanding “truth” even if it would hit us in the face...

Back to the summer RCIA: I started by myself as Bill was a Catholic from the get go. I didn’t have a sponsor, but I was determined to learn about the Catholic religion because I so loved the beauty of the Church. When they started to cover the chapter on marriage, I hit the wall! I was very upset, confused, and yes, if I’m honest, ashamed of the way I had lived my life. I said some things later on I had to apologize for, such as, “You’ll never get new converts into this Church if you don’t re-adjust your rules on divorce”. This is where St. Francis Spirituality Center comes into play. Bill and I have a wonderful Catholic friend, Jerry, who discovered how upset I was and invited us both to a Thursday “just talk and ask questions” session with Sister Edna. We ended up going many times and yes, I brought my questions. I remember vividly saying to Sister Edna, “I’ll never be considered good enough to become a Catholic!”. You see, this marriage thing was a real show-stopper for me. And, after I was told I couldn’t partake of the Eucharist because I wasn’t a Catholic - that did it!

Sister Edna was my angel. Talk about patience and tolerance. Wow. I know she probably thought I would never keep trying, but the great news is I DID KEEP TRYING. With the help of Father Joe, RCIA, Catholic women, prayers and the Holy Spirit inside of me urging me to keep an open mind, I am more than happy to say I am now A MEMBER of St. Joe’s. Bill was my sponsor during the RCIA fall classes, and he learned things about Catholic teachings he himself didn’t know or remember.

I’m writing this today to encourage others who have either fallen away from the Catholic Church or like in my case, have never been exposed to many of the Church teachings, to keep an open mind and get involved with an RCIA class. There is no pressure to join, only loving people who can answer your questions and give you knowledge about Church history that, if you’re like me, will blow your mind.

I would like to thank Sister Edna and St. Francis Spirituality Center once again for all the support you gave me in my journey to find “Home”. I’m pretty sure I would have given up had it not been for your sincere love and patience. Becoming a Catholic is not something you just “join”. I’m finding out daily that I must live my faith, and I couldn’t be happier.

Bonnie Love Steinmetz

(Proud member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Tiffin, Ohio)
New Fundraiser Benefits St. Francis Spirituality Center

St. Francis Spirituality Center is launching a new fundraiser in 2017 in place of the Annual Fall BBQ. This year we will be offering a Calendar Raffle with 31 great opportunities to win either cash or a gift card from one of many businesses throughout the region (e.g. restaurants, stores and other services). The minimum prize value is $25.00; maximum value is $500. A winner’s name will be drawn daily during the month of December. Each raffle entry is eligible to win multiple times.

You may enter as many times as you wish. The cost of each ticket is $10.00 or six entries for $50.00. Tickets will be sold through our website, at our center and at other community events between September 1 and December 30.

Surprise yourself or a loved one with an unexpected gift during the Christmas season, and at the same time support St. Francis Spirituality Center’s programs for healing, reconciliation and renewal.

Watch for more details in our fall publications and on our website.

Healing Programs are Changing Lives

In March, St. Francis Spirituality Center hosted “Now in My Family” which was a program for parents, grandparents, adult children and significant others who face the reality of drug addiction by their family members.

The seminar was a partnership between the following agencies: SFSC (Sr. Edna Michel, Spiritual Director), Firelands Counseling & Recovery Services, (Michelle Clinger Psychologist & Site Director), Oriana House (Deanna England, Clinical Coordinator) and C.A.R.S.A. (Charla VanOsdol, Coordinator). The day also included a testimony from a mother of an addicted son.

“It was enriching to meet other people and share feelings and experiences. It was educational and informative.”

- Anonymous

SAVE THE DATE

“The Journey Beyond Combat” ~ November 3-5, 2017
For All Veterans and Active Duty Service Members
Earth Day Returns to FELC

“The Community Earth Day Celebration is always great fun for the whole family, especially the kids. The event gives everyone a break to be “in sync” with nature. It is also an opportunity to be away from the distractions of the social media and digital technology (except during selfies and picture taking!),” said Rem Confesor, FELC Board Member. Attendees enjoyed outdoor games, healthy snacks, recycled crafts, an obstacle course, seed planting, soil activities, water quality monitoring and much more. There was also a new 50/50 raffle and chance to win a “Life Straw.”

The Franciscan Earth Literacy Center hopes to continue the Earth Day event on the St. Francis Campus, where it began many years ago. The campus offers woods to explore, tree climbing opportunities, learning experiences with solar panels, a wind turbine, a straw bale house, several animals inside and outside the center, all a beautiful backdrop for the Earth Day event.

The Earth Day event is a collaborative effort between the following agencies and organizations: Columbian H.S. Green Sunday/Bio Club, Franciscan Earth Literacy Center, Heidelberg Water Quality Research Lab, OSS Solid Waste District, Seneca County Park District, Seneca Conservation District, Seneca County Master Gardeners Association, Tiffin Parks & Recreation Department, Tiffin Seneca Public Library, Tiffin Water Pollution Control Center and Tiffin YMCA.

Photos taken by Rem Confesor.